

## FEATURE HOME



“The client wanted the outside to be very low key—he didn’t want people to realize everything that was going on inside and out back,” explains Todd Best, president and owner of Best Builders. “The house looks like every other house built in Tsawwassen in the late ‘60s or early ‘70s, but only from the front.”

The idea was to create a place where the homeowner and his three young children could be together whenever they wanted—or apart, as needed.

This is immediately apparent when you walk through the front door and see that the pony wall from the entrance serves as the back for a breakfast nook banquette. There’s also a wall offering storage in both drawers and open shelving; a desk to the right of the refrigerator provides a handy homework spot under the watchful eye of the adult preparing dinner.

Huge exposed honey-coloured beams form a visual framework for the kitchen while a lime backsplash

provides a pop of colour on one wall. White-lined cabinets are interspersed with the refrigerator, concealed behind more millwork, and all the cabinet doors are faced with grain-matched wood in wide variegated stripes of milk and dark chocolate.

Three pendant lights in concentric, zigzagged circles direct the eye toward the glossy white surface of the kitchen island, which contrasts beautifully with an oversize plank of knotty wood that serves as a dining counter. Its rippled edge and semi-unfinished surface bring a tactile organic element to the sleek modernity of the kitchen. Low back chairs, along with the rest of the furniture, were custom-made for the house.

“[The client] liked the vibe of the late ‘60s and wanted to keep that retro funky factor,” says Sarah Gallop, principal of Sarah Gallop Design Inc. “The idea is to pay attention to an era, not to replicate it exactly.”



THOSE WHO WATCH HOME IMPROVEMENT SHOWS MAY BE FAMILIAR WITH THE DESIRE FOR ‘CURB APPEAL’ OR THE ‘WOW FACTOR’—A HOME THAT DEMANDS ADMIRATION THE MOMENT YOU SEE IT. STIRLING HOUSE IS JUST THE OPPOSITE.

WORDS BY CLAUDIA KWAN  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY EMA PETER

## STIRLING HOUSE

A ‘60s RETREAT





She says that's why they were strategic about which portions of the home stayed in the '60s; the brightly coloured backsplash is easily changed out if preferences change, or another purchaser doesn't like it. However, swapping out cabinets is a much more expensive proposition so they refrained from making them too date-specific.

The living room retains key elements of the original home. Easily visible from the kitchen, it has huge windows that flood it with natural light.

**Above.** Exposed honey-coloured beams form a visual framework for the kitchen while a lime backsplash adds a pop of bright colour to the space.

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“We kept part of the wood panelling and left it as a feature wall,” explains Best. “The original fireplace is also still there. The hearth was too big and cumbersome so we cut it down a little bit, but we kept the bricks—we just brought in a mason to clean up some of the edges.”

The kitchen also accesses the massive 1,000-square-foot multi-level sundeck where adults can stay on one level, kids on another. Bench seating in the gazebo provides space for larger gatherings and a fire pit keeps everyone warm into the late evening hours.

Best says he particularly enjoyed working with this client because of his openness to unusual ideas—they removed the backyard and installed artificial turf for a soccer field, complete with nets. Halogen lights from the roof flood the field when needed and you’ll find the neighbourhood kids romping around there regularly.

Back inside, each child has their own private bedroom on the upper floor—with space for clothing or dolls or showing off a prize Lego collection, depending on individual interests.

The lower floor contains another homework area. They can make crafts or play computer games or the whole family can cuddle on the couch in the central TV room area. A fireplace makes it extra cozy.

Behind that room is the master bedroom which has a fully equipped ensuite bathroom. A large painting on the wall pays homage to the homeowner’s love of all things Marilyn Monroe. This floor functions almost like an independent one bedroom flat while still being within easy listening distance of the children.



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— Sarah Gallop






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**Above.** The lower floor provides additional space for homework, crafts, computer games or just hanging out with the family in the central TV room area. The master bedroom with ensuite is also on this level.

Best acknowledges that working on the split level home was challenging; all the duct work was removed and high efficiency plumbing and heating systems rerouted around the exterior to reclaim every possible inch of usable space. All of the mechanical was put into the crawl space.

Another client and builder might have been tempted to tear the house down and start from the beginning but that would have been short sighted.

"It costs at least \$500,000 – 600,000 to build a new home and that might only get you to the bare studs," Best points out. "Here we kept the shell, did all new plumbing and wiring and drywall for \$400,000 and still had money for nice finishing touches."

He and Gallop agree that the client got exactly what he wanted—a '60s home that includes both family space and private areas and serves as an idyllic retreat. 

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